GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3214
ANSWERED ON:23.08.2006
TALKS WITH PAKISTAN ON KASHMIR ISSUE
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Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) The details of the talks held with Pakistan regarding Kashmir issue during the last two years;

(b) The details of the results of the said talks held so far; and

(c) The reaction of the Union Government to the results?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED)

(a) − (b) The Foreign Secretaries of India and Pakistan had a detailed exchange of views on Jammu & Kashmir, one of the eight subjects of the Composite Dialogue, during the talks in New Delhi on 27-28 June 2004. Recalling the reassurance contained in the Joint Press Statement of 6 January 2004, they exchanged views on carrying the process forward in an atmosphere free from terrorism and violence.

The Foreign Secretaries reiterated the hope that the dialogue will lead to peaceful settlement of all bilateral issues, including Jammu and Kashmir, to the satisfaction of both sides. They agreed to continue the sustained and serious dialogue to find a peaceful negotiated final settlement.

During the meeting between Pakistan President Musharraf and Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh in New York on 24 September 2004, it was agreed that possible options for a peaceful, negotiated settlement of the issue should be explored in a sincere spirit and purposeful manner. Prime Minister, however, conveyed to President Musharraf that there can be no redrawing of boundaries. During the Foreign Secretary level talks in Islamabad on 27−28 December 2004, both sides discussed, inter alia, the issue of Jammu and Kashmir and agreed to carry forward the process.

During the visit of the former External Affairs Minister, Shri Natwar Singh to Islamabad in February 2005, both governments agreed to allow travel across the Line of Control between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad by bus. The bus service was operationalised on 7 April 2005

During the visit of Pakistan President Musharraf to New Delhi on 16-18 April 2005, it agreed to continue discussions on Jammu and Kashmir in a sincere, purposeful and forward looking manner for a final settlement. They agreed to pursue further measures to enhance interaction and cooperation across the LoC including agreed meeting points for divided families, trade, pilgrimages and cultural interaction. They agreed to operationalise additional routes including that between Poonch and Rawalakot and a truck service on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad route to promote trade. The Poonch-Rawalakot bus commenced service from 20 June 2006. Modalities for trade across the Line of Control on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad route and the meeting points are being worked out.

During the talks between the Foreign Secretaries of India and Pakistan in New Delhi on 17-18 January 2006, the two Foreign Secretaries had a detailed exchange of views on Jammu & Kashmir and agreed to continue the sustained dialogue in a purposeful and forward looking manner to find a peaceful and negotiated final settlement. They noted with satisfaction the opening of the five crossing points across the Line of Control in November 2005 after the earthquake.

The Foreign Secretaries also discussed Pakistan's proposed concepts of self-governance, demilitarisation of three towns and joint management. The Pakistan side was informed that self-governance is embedded in our Constitution. Jammu and Kashmir already enjoys autonomy under the Indian Constitution and has in place a democratically elected government. However, there is only nominal autonomy in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) and there has been no popular election in Gilgit-Baltistan, which does not even have a legal/constitutional status. Any demilitarisation or redeployment of security forces within the territory of India is a sovereign decision of the Government of India based on our assessment of the security situation prevailing in any particular part of the country and cannot be dictated by any foreign government. Concepts such as joint control or joint management over Jammu and Kashmir, proposed by President Musharraf, cannot be the basis of a settlement of the issue of Jammu and Kashmir because Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India. There can be no compromise on the sovereignty of India over the state of Jammu and Kashmir and on India's unity.

(c) India is committed to resolving all outstanding issues with Pakistan bilaterally and peacefully in accordance with the Simla Agreement. The Government intends to continue with the present process of confidence building, cooperation and dialogue in an

atmosphere free from terror and violence.